

# A Cycle of Epigrams on the Lord's Feasts in Cod. Marc. Gr. 524

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Codex graecus 524 of the Biblioteca Marciana in Venice is doubtless one of the most important collections of poems of the middle Byzantine period. On the basis of the characteristics of its script ("Fettaugenstil") it is usually dated to around 1300;<sup>1</sup> only Mioni in his recent catalogue of the Marciana suggests the beginning of the thirteenth century,<sup>2</sup> a dating rather unlikely in view of the fact that the codex contains a poem on an event that occurred, according to the inscription, in 1197 (Constantine Stilbes' poem on a great fire in Constantinople).<sup>3</sup>

In addition to works attributed to well-known authors of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, such as Michael Psellos, Ioannes Mauropous, Christophoros Mitylenaios, Nikolaos Kallikles, and Theodoros Prodromos, the manuscript contains much anonymous material from the same period which has partly remained unedited. A survey of the contents and the relevant bibliography is provided by Mioni's catalogue. For more detailed information, it is still useful to consult the description by Spyridon Lampros,<sup>4</sup> who gives all the incipits and desinits and publishes numerous texts, some in full, others in part.

After some poems by Christophoros Mitylenaios (fol. 104r-v), there follows a great number of anonymous pieces, among them, on folio 105v-106r, a group of twenty-one epigrams<sup>5</sup> on the main scenes of the lives of Christ and the Virgin. Lampros publishes the first and the last of these poems<sup>6</sup> and provides the inscriptions of the others. On the

I take the opportunity to express my deep gratitude to the authorities of Dumbarton Oaks (especially to Prof. Henry Maguire) for inviting me to take part in the seminar on epigrams devoted to works of art, as well as to all the participants in the seminar who by numerous valuable suggestions and items of information particularly (though by no means exclusively) regarding the art historical aspects of the subject helped to enhance the success of my interpretatory efforts.

<sup>1</sup>H. Hunger, *Der byzantinische Katz-Mäuse-Krieg* (Graz, 1968), 13.

<sup>2</sup>*Bibliothecae Divi Marci Venetiarum codices graeci manuscripti*, vol. II, *Thesaurus antiquus, Codices 300–625*, ed. E. Mioni (Rome, 1985), 399–407.

<sup>3</sup>No. 15 (Mioni, 400). The text of this voluminous poem, which is transmitted in two different versions, is available only in the unpublished dissertation by J. Diethart, "Der Rhetor und Didaskalos Konstantinos Stilbes" (Vienna, 1971), 115–23. 134–71.

<sup>4</sup>Sp. Lampros, "Ὁ Μαρκανδὸς κώδιξ 524," *Νέος Ἑλλ.* 8 (1911), 3–59. 113–92.

<sup>5</sup>No. XXI, though separated from the Corpus by another poem, fits well into the overall conception so that we have decided to treat it as part of the cycle. We shall return to this point later.

<sup>6</sup>Lampros, 143 No. 183, 144 No. 214.

following pages we shall provide the complete text of the cycle together with an English translation and some notes of comment.

The orthography of the manuscript is excellent, no text alterations proved necessary (only in XI 2 the restitution of ἐκπίνης, which the scribe had changed to ἐκπίνεις, is evidently required; by this form, be it grammatically correct or not, the author obviously expresses the future character of the event). Accents have been normalized in a few cases, the iota subscriptum added; the punctuation takes account of the scribe's practice without following it slavishly. The poem numbers have been added.

[105v] I. Εἰς τὰ ἅγια τῶν ἁγίων  
 Νύμφη προέρχου, φωσφορεῖτε παρθένοι,  
 σβέσον προφήτα τῆς σκιάς τὴν λυχνίαν·  
 φωτὸς γὰρ ἀντεισῆλθεν ἰδοὺ λυχνία.

II. Εἰς τὸν χαιρετισμόν  
 [Ἄγγελος] Πάναγνε χαῖρε, τὸν Θεοῦ τέξεις γόνον.  
 [Θεοτόκος] Τεράστιον τὸ ῥῆμα συζύγου δίχα.  
 [Ἄ.] Ναὶ πνεῦμα δέξῃ θεῖον. [Θ.] Ὡς γένοιτό μοι.

III. Εἰς τὴν Χριστοῦ γέννησιν  
 Τὸ θαῦμα φρικτόν· παρθένος θεὸν κύει,  
 καὶ πρὸς τὸν ἄμνὸν ἄγγελος μὲν ποιμένας,  
 ἀστὴρ δὲ μάγους πρὸς τὸν ἥλιον φέρει.

IV. Εἰς τὴν ὑπαπαντήν  
 Ἄνθρακα λαβὶς καὶ τὸ πῦρ βάτος φέρει·  
 δέδεξο πρέσβυ καὶ καθαίρου καὶ κλύου  
 καὶ τοῖς ἐν ἄδου πρόδρομος πρῶτος γίνου.

V. Εἰς τὴν βάπτισιν  
 Βαπτιστὰ μὴ δεῖδιθι τοῦ πυρὸς θίγων·  
 οὐ γὰρ φλογισθῆς, ὥς δὲ λύχνος φῶς λάβης  
 καὶ πνεῦμα θεῖον ὡς περιστερὰν ἴδης.

VI. Εἰς τὴν μεταμόρφωσιν  
 Ὅρος, Μωϋσῆς καὶ θεὸς νῦν ἐνθάδε·  
 ὁ δὲ γνόφος ποῦ; συμπαρήλθε τῷ νόμῳ·  
 Χριστὸς δὲ μύσταις καὶ θεόπταις φῶς βρύει.

VII. Εἰς τὴν ἔγερσιν τοῦ Λαζάρου  
 [Χριστός] Λάζαρε δεῦρο· [Λάζαρος] Τίς βοῶν ἡγειρέ με;  
 ναὶ ναὶ τὸ σουδάριον ἐξάρατέ μου·  
 φωνή με Χριστοῦ τοῦ φίλου περιτρέχει.

VIII. Εἰς τὴν βαΐοφόρον  
 Ἴδου τὰ τέκνα τοὺς γονεῖς κατασχύνει·  
 ὃν γὰρ πέπλους στρωννύντα σὺν κλάδοις σέβει,  
 χλεῦθς ἐπενδύσουσιν αὐτοὶ πορφύραν.

IX. Εἰς τὸν δεῖπνον  
 Χριστοῦ φονεὺς ὧν αἷμα μὲν τούτου πίνεις,  
 τὴν σάρκα δ' οὐκ ἔαγες εἰδὼν Ἰούδα·  
 ὃς γὰρ φάγη ζῆ, σὸς δὲ κλῆρος ἀγχόνη.

X. Εἰς τὸν νιπτῆρα

[Χριστός] Νίφθητι Πέτρε νῦν τέως τοὺς σοὺς πόδας·  
τὴν γὰρ κεφαλὴν δακρύοις αὐτὸς πλύνῃς  
ταύτη με νυκτὶ τρίτον ἐξηρηνημένος.

XI. Εἰς τὴν προσευχήν

Αἰτεῖς Ἰησοῦ λύτρα τοῦ ποτηρίου,  
καὶ μὴν σὺ σαυτῷ τοῦτο κερνῶν ἐκπίνῃς·  
ἢ ταῦτα δεῖγμα φύσεών σου τῶν δύο.

XII. Εἰς τὴν προδοσίαν

Σαίνων τὸν ἀμνὸν ἐκ φιλημάτων κύον  
λύκοις προδίδως· ἀλλ' ὁ μὲν ζῇ καὶ θάνῃ,  
σὺ δ' ἀγχορίζου καὶ στεροῦ ζῶων δύο.

XIII. Εἰς τὸν Χριστὸν ἐλκόμενον ἐπὶ τῷ σταυρωθῆναι

Λύου προπάτορ, ἐκτρύγα ζωῆς ξύλου·  
χειρῶν θεὸς γὰρ καὶ φάρυγγος τὴν δέσιν  
στέγει χάριν σου μηδὲ κραυγὴν ἐξάγων.

[106r] XIV. Εἰς τὴν σταύρωσιν

Διπλοῦς ὁ παθὼν· ζῶν γὰρ ἐστὶ καὶ νέκυς,  
ὡς αἶμα δηλοῖ καὶ τὸ συμβλύσαν ὕδωρ·  
οὐκοῦν θεὸς κράζουσι πέτραι γῇ σκότος.

XV. Εἰς τὴν ἀποκαθήλωσιν

Κατήλθες εἰς γῆν, γῆς ἀνήρθης πρὸς ξύλον,  
ξύλου κατήχθης πρὸς τὸν ἄδην Χριστέ μου  
κάκειθεν ἀνείλκυσας Ἀδὰμ πρὸς πόλον.

XVI. Εἰς τὸν ἐνταφιασμόν

Τοὺς νυκτερινοὺς νῦν μαθητάς μοι βλέπε  
τὸν ἥλιον κλίναντα πρὸς δυσμὰς βίου  
κρύπτοντας εἰς γῆν ὃν διὰ τρίτης Ἰδης.

XVII. Εἰς τὴν ἀνάστασιν

Τὴν σάρκα τάφος, τὴν ψυχὴν ἄδης φέρει·  
Χριστὸς παρ' ἀμφοῖν εἷς, ὑπόστασις μία·  
ἄλλεσθε νεκροί, θνήσκε θανάτου κράτος.

XVIII. Εἰς τὴν ἀνάληψιν

Ἄσαρκος ἦλθες, σὰρξ ἀνῆλθες πρὸς πόλον·  
δίσσευε Χριστέ σὴν φιλόανθρωπον φύσιν  
ἄνθρωπος ὀφθεῖς καὶ θεὸς πάλιν μένων.

XIX. Εἰς τὴν πεντηκοστήν

Θεὸς τὸ πνεῦμα, δύσθεον φράττου στόμα·  
πῦρ ἐστὶ καὶ γὰρ καὶ πυρὸς γλώσσας νέμει  
λόγου μαθηταῖς συγγενοὺς κατ' οὐσίαν.

XX. Εἰς τὴν κοίμησιν τῆς ὑπεραγίας θεοτόκου

Ἀπόστολοι στάζουσιν ἐκ νεφῶν δρόσοι  
πρὸς τὸν θεοδρόσιστον ἐξ ὕψους πόκον,  
σταγῶν δε Χριστὸς πνεῦμα μητρὸς λαμβάνει.

XXI. Εἰς τὸν ἐν τῷ αἰγιαλῷ τῆς Τιβεριάδος ἄριστον

Νίπτεις Πέτρου πρὶν σῶτερ ἐν δείπνῳ πόδας,

ἀρνήεως τούτου δὲ νῦν ῥύπον πλύνεις  
ἐγγὺς θαλάσσης συναριστῶν ὡς φίλῳ.

I Protoev. Jac. 7, 2 II Luke 1, 28. 34–35. 38 III Luke 2, 7–20 3 Matt. 2, 1–2 IV Luke 2, 25–32 1a Isa. 6, 6  
1b Exod. 3, 2 V 3 Matt. 3, 16; Mark 1, 10; Luke 3, 22 VII John 11, 43–44 VIII 2 Matt. 21, 8; Mark 11, 8  
VIII 3 Matt. 27, 27–30; Mark 15, 16–19; John 19, 2–3 XI Matt. 26, 39–42; Mark 14, 35–39;  
Luke 22, 41–44 XII 1–2a Luke 22, 48 2b Rom. 14, 9 3 Matt. 27, 5 XIV 2 John 19, 34 3 Matt. 27, 45. 51  
XVI John 19, 38–42 XVIII John 16, 28; Mark 16, 19 XIX Acts 2, 2–4. 13–15 XIX 1 Rom. 3, 19 XXI  
John 21, 9–13

#### I. On the Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple

Bride, come forward, virgins, carry lamps, prophet, extinguish the lamp of shadow; behold, the lamp of light has come in instead.

#### II. On the Annunciation

[Angel] Greetings to you, the perfect in purity, you will bring forth the Son of God. [Virgin] A wondrous word, given that there is no husband. [Angel] Yet you will receive the Holy Ghost. [Virgin] So be it.

#### III. On the Birth of Christ

The wonder is awe-inspiring: the Virgin gives birth to God, and an angel brings the shepherds to the lamb, the Magi a star to the sun.

#### IV. On the Hypapante

The tongs hold the coal and the bush the fire. Hold, old man, be purified, be listened to and become the first forerunner for those in Hades.

#### V. On the Baptism

Baptist, don't fear to touch the fire! For you won't be burnt, but you will take the light like a lamp and you will see the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove.

#### VI. On the Transfiguration

The mountain, Moses and God are now here; but where is darkness? It has gone with the Law; Christ pours forth light to the initiate and the god-seeing.

#### VII. On the Resuscitation of Lazarus

[Christ] Lazarus, come forth! [Lazarus] Who awakened me by calling? Oh yes, take off the cloth from me; the voice of Christ my friend is around me.

#### VIII. On Palm Sunday

See how the children put to shame their parents: The One whom they (the children) venerate by spreading garments and branches, the adults will dress in a mock purple robe.

#### IX. On the Last Supper

Being Christ's murderer you drink his blood, but have not eaten his flesh, and you were right in doing so, Judas; for he who eats (of it) will live, whereas your lot is the noose.

#### X. On the Foot-washing

[Christ] Now for the moment, Peter, have your feet washed, because your head you will wash yourself in tears after having denied me thrice this very night.

#### XI. On the Prayer (at Gethsemane)

You, Jesus, ask for deliverance from this chalice, and yet is you who will mix and drink it up; this indeed is a proof of your two natures.

## XII. On the Betrayal

Oh dog, fawning upon the Lamb you betray him to the wolves by your embrace;  
but he will live even after having died, whereas you will hang, thus deprived of  
two lives.

## XIII. On Christ dragged to the Crucifixion

Be released, forefather, harvest from the tree of life; for God endures for your  
sake binding of hands and neck without even crying aloud.

## XIV. On the Crucifixion

Twofold is he who has suffered; for he is living and dead at the same time, as the  
blood and the water gushing forth together show. "So he is God," cry out rocks,  
earth, darkness.

## XV. On the Descent from the Cross

You descended to earth, were raised from earth to the wooden cross, went down  
from the cross to Hades, my Christ, and drew up Adam from there to Heaven.

## XVI. On the Entombment

Now look at the disciples who at night cover in the earth the sun who had declined  
toward the setting of life and whom you will see on the third day.

## XVII. On the Resurrection

The tomb holds the flesh, Hades the soul; Christ is one with both, a single hypostas-  
is; rejoice ye dead, die O Realm of Death!

## XVIII. On the Ascension

Without flesh you came, as flesh you rose to Heaven; Christ, double your man-  
loving nature having appeared as a man and again remaining God.

## XIX. On the Pentecost

The wind is God; the godless mouth, be stopped up; for he is fire and distributes  
tongues of fire among the disciples of the Logos who is his kinsman according  
to essence.

## XX. On the Dormition of the most holy Mother of God

Apostles drop down from the clouds as dew upon the fleece bedewed by God  
from on high, and Christ the drop receives the soul of his mother.

## XXI. On the Breakfast on the shore of the Sea of Tiberias

Before, at the Supper, you wash Peter's feet, Savior; now you wash away the filth  
of his denial, taking breakfast near the sea with him as a friend.

Among the various groups of epigrams on New Testament scenes dating from the  
eleventh and twelfth centuries (see the concordance below), the closest relative to our  
cycle is that transmitted by two manuscripts from around 1100 (Marc. gr. 507, Vatop. 36)  
and now available in two independent, simultaneously issued editions.<sup>7</sup> However, there  
is one striking difference between the two collections: the *DOP* 46 group consists of  
poems of different length (from two to four verses) and juxtaposes sometimes two or  
three epigrams referring to one and the same biblical scene so that the conclusion may

<sup>7</sup>Ed. P. Pagonari-Antoniou, "Τὰ βυζαντινὰ ἐπιγράμματα τῶν κωδίκων Βατοπεδίου 36, Marc. gr. 507 καὶ Ζα-  
γοράς 115," *Δίπτυχα* 5 (1991–92), 33–58; W. Hörandner, "Ein Zyklus von Epigrammen zu Darstellungen von  
Herrenfesten und Wunderszenen," *DOP* 46 (1992), 107–15. While the texts do not differ essentially, the  
comments of the two editors supplement rather than supersede each other. In the following, for the sake of  
convenience I shall quote these poems as the *DOP* 46 group.

be drawn that the pieces were not composed by a single poet, but copied by a collector of epigrams from various works of art.<sup>8</sup> The cycle in Marc. gr. 524 shows in many respects a much more homogeneous character and seems to reveal the hand of a poet who had been commissioned to furnish the captions to the illustrations of a New Testament manuscript (in my opinion the most likely assumption)<sup>9</sup> or to a fresco cycle in a church. There are no double or triple versions, each epigram consists of three verses, and there is also a high degree of homogeneity concerning contents and composition that links the various pieces together. Though the group as it is transmitted in the Marcianus lacks a general inscription (in contrast to the *DOP* 46 group headed Στίχοι διάφοροι εἰς τὰς ἁγίας εἰκόνας τῶν ἑορτῶν), the poems themselves contain various indications pointing to their close relation to pictures. Evidence for such an interpretation is provided by words like ἰδοῦ (I 3; VIII 1), ἐνθάδε (VI 1) or βλέπε (XVI 1), by the dialogical element and by some of the descriptive passages. On the other hand, in a few cases the text seems to be in contradiction to the existing iconographical types of the scene in question (in the strict sense, however, this applies only to No. IX, see the commentary to this epigram). On the whole, without being able to dissipate any doubts I still regard inscriptional use as the most plausible assumption concerning the original function of the cycle.

As to composition, the element of direct speech is dominant: in twelve of the twenty-one epigrams the poet addresses the persons concerned directly, once (No. XVI) he turns to the spectator, once (No. X) Christ speaks to Peter, and in two cases (Nos. II, VII) we have a real dialogue. The remaining five pieces (Nos. III, VI, VIII, XIV, XX) are reflections on the theological meaning of the scene in question.

Language and meter may be categorized as typical for middle Byzantine writers of an average level: replacement of *futurum* by *coniunctivus aoristi*, in itself quite a normal phenomenon in the language of the period,<sup>10</sup> occurs in five places (II 3; V 2.3; X 2; XVI 3; originally also in XI 2), thus perhaps a little more frequently than in works of the highest level. The vocabulary is devoid of great peculiarities, the only real *athesauriston*<sup>11</sup> being θεοδόσιτος in XX 2.

All verse endings are paroxytone. The ratio between the two possible caesurae (*Binnenschlüsse*) reflects the normal tendency in the dodecasyllabus of the period (B5:B7 = 49:14, i.e., 77,8:22,2%). The same is true of the distribution of accents before the *Binnenschluss* (twenty-one paroxytona and twenty-eight oxytona before B 5, ten proparoxytona and four paroxytona before B7).

The prosodic rules of the iambic trimeter have been observed in principle. Slight mistakes are relatively frequent (e.g., IV 1 λαβίς, VII 2 σουδάριον, IX 2 ἑφᾶγες etc.),

<sup>8</sup>Hörandner, 114.

<sup>9</sup>Evidence for the existence of cycles of this kind is furnished by at least one surviving example, Cod. 3 of the Patriarchate at Istanbul, ed. R. S. Nelson, "Text and Image in a Byzantine Gospel Book in Istanbul (Ecumenical Patriarchate, cod. 3)," Ph.D. diss. (New York University, 1978); cf. the concordance at the end of this article.

<sup>10</sup>There is a broad documentation of this phenomenon in the various modern editions of Byzantine texts; see, e.g., W. Hörandner, *Theodoros Prodromos, Historische Gedichte* (Vienna, 1974), 120–21.

<sup>11</sup>In the files of the *Lexikon zur byzantinischen Gräzität*, no other occurrence of this word is recorded whereas θεόδοσιος is attested several times.

whereas grave deviations are rare and restricted to proper names (VI 1 Μωϋσῆς, IX 2 Ἰούδα).

Though an exact dating of the cycle is not possible, nothing seems to contradict the assumption that it belongs to the same period as the datable pieces in the codex, that is, from the middle of the eleventh to the beginning of the thirteenth century.

In the following notes we shall not only record parallels in other epigrams of the period, but shall also try to trace specific elements of the theological conception of the author and to bring them into relation with iconographical types of representation of the scenes in Byzantine art.

I. The Presentation of the Virgin in the Temple is celebrated by the Greek church on 21 November (Ἡ ἐν τῷ Ναῷ Εἰσοδος τῆς ὑπεραγίας Θεοτόκου).<sup>12</sup> The representations of the scene in works of art are well documented in the exhaustive study of Jacqueline Lafontaine-Dosogne.<sup>13</sup> In Byzantine texts it is sometimes related to a passage in the Psalms (Ps. 44,15). However, the prophet addressed in V.2 is obviously not David, but Zachariah. The priest who, according to Protoev. Jacobi VII 2, receives the girl in the Temple, bears this name (ibid., VIII 3) and is generally identified with the homonymous prophet who is well known for his nightly visions (cf. Zach. 4,2 Ἐώρακα καὶ ἰδοὺ λυχνία χρυσῇ ὅλη . . . καὶ ἐπὶ λύχνοι ἐπάνω αὐτῆς). Theodore Prodromos mentions him by name in the relevant hexametric tetrastichon (PG 133, col. 1178, Ἐννομά τοι ταῦτα, Ζαχαρία, ἔννομα ταῦτα;) and addresses him as prophet in the iambic one (ibid., Δέχου, προφῆτα, Γαβριὴλ ὑπηρετήν). In a text published by Papadopoulos-Kerameus as supplement to the Painter's Manual of Dionysios of Phourna,<sup>14</sup> the following epigram is ascribed to Zachariah:

Ἐγὼ λυχνίαν ἐπτάφωτόν σε εἶδον·  
σοῦ ὁ τόκος ἔδειξε σὸν θαῦμα, κόρη.

The opposition of the light of Christ to the shadow of the Old Testament,<sup>15</sup> in itself a commonplace motif of Christian exegesis,<sup>16</sup> is typical of our author's endeavor to point to the essential theological issue of the scenes treated in his epigrams and represented in the paintings they were to accompany.

II. The epigram imitates the dialogue of the relevant biblical passage, with the only difference that, for the sake of theological clarity, the author transposes the prediction that the child will be called Son of God from the end of the conversation to its very beginning.

Again, it is Theodore Prodromos who, in his iambic tetrastichon Εἰς τὸν Εὐαγγελισμόν (PG 133, col. 1197 c), offers a close parallel to our epigram, though the dialogical character of the piece has been partly obscured by the punctuation in Migne's edition (the Basel

<sup>12</sup> *Menaia*, II (Rome, 1889), 216–236; cf. *ODB*, III, 1715.

<sup>13</sup> J. Lafontaine-Dosogne, *Iconographie de l'enfance de la Vierge dans l'Empire byzantin et en occident*, I (Brussels, 1964), 136–67. For more recent bibliography, cf., by the same author, "Kindheit und Jugend Mariae," in *RBK*, IV (Stuttgart, 1990), 83–101.

<sup>14</sup> Διονυσίου τοῦ ἐκ Φουρνᾶ Ἑρμηνεία τῆς ζωγραφικῆς τέχνης ed. A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus (St. Petersburg, 1909), 282.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Heb., 10,1 Σκιὰν γὰρ ἔχων ὁ νόμος τῶν μελλόντων ἀγαθῶν . . .

<sup>16</sup> Cf. below, No. VI.

edition on which Migne's text is based<sup>17</sup> does not even have the first strong punctuation mark until the end of V.3):<sup>18</sup>

Ὡ χαῖρε, σεμνή τῆς ξένης ὀπτασίας,  
Θεὸν κυήσεις· τοῦ τεραστίου λόγου!  
Πίστευε τὴν κύησιν ἄρρενος δίχα·  
Ναὶ, τοῦ Θεοῦ θέλοντος, ὥς γένοιτό μοι.

In the light of the Marcianus epigram we are now able to change the punctuation of Prodromos' tetrastichon and to understand it as follows:

[᾿Α.] Ὡ χαῖρε, σεμνή. [Θ.] Τῆς ξένης ὀπτασίας.  
[᾿Α.] Θεὸν κυήσεις. [Θ.] Τοῦ τεραστίου λόγου.  
[᾿Α.] Πίστευε τὴν κύησιν. [Θ.] Ἄρρενος δίχα;  
[᾿Α.] Ναί, τοῦ Θεοῦ θέλοντος. [Θ.] Ὡς γένοιτό μοι.

The distribution of the text of the first two verses is irrefutable, V.3 could also be entirely assigned to the Angel and consequently V.4 to the Virgin.

An even more striking parallel to our epigram is to be found on a fresco depiction of the Annunciation in the Panagia Mavriotissa near Kastoria<sup>19</sup> where the following two verses are ascribed to the Theotokos (orthography normalized by myself):

Τεράστιον τὸ ῥῆμα συζύγου δίχα.  
Ἵπὲρ φύσιν μέν, ἀλλ' ὅμως γένοιτό μοι.

According to existent publications the left half of the fresco has been completely destroyed. I owe the verification of my assumption that the whole poem consisted of four verses, the beginning probably being identical with that of our epigram, to the kindness of Irmgard Hutter who, on a visit to Dumbarton Oaks, discovered a photograph (taken by N. Moutsopoulos) showing, beside faint traces of the Archangel's garment, the complete text of the inscription:

Πάναγνε χαῖρε· τὸν Θεοῦ τέ[ξει]ς λόγον·  
ναὶ τῷ Θεῷ γὰρ [δ]ύναται πάντα πέλει.

Given the structure of the verses (no speaker's change in the interior of a verse), as well as their distribution on the church wall (they are separated by the apse), it seems to me that in this case they were read as two separate couplets (v.1–2) Archangel, V.3–4 Virgin).

Although this partial identity of the two epigrams cannot be due to chance, it is hard to decide whether we have to assume a direct interdependence between them (and if so, in which direction) or one or more archetypes on which both texts depend in different ways.

III. V.1 also has a close parallel at the beginning of the relevant iambic tetrastichon of Theodore Prodromos (PG 133, col. 1177c):

<sup>17</sup>*Cyri Theodori Prodromi epigrammata* (Basel, 1536), § 3. In V.4 the Renaissance editor has ὥς instead of Migne's pedantic ὡς.

<sup>18</sup>Cf. Migne's translation: "Gaude, venerabilis Virgo, novi spectaculi gratia, Deum paries; pro quam stupenda oratio! sed conceptum iri Filium citra viri copulam existima. Omnino quemadmodum decrevit Deus, sic mihi fiat." Thus, the translator seems to assign the whole of V.1–3 to the Angel!

<sup>19</sup>Reproduction in St. Pelekanides, Καστορία, I. Βυζαντιναὶ τοιχογραφίαι. Πίνακες (Thessalonike, 1953), pl. 68 b.



Ἵπὲρ λόγον τὸ θαῦμα παρθένος κύει.  
Ἵπὲρ λόγον τὸ θαῦμα, πλὴν Θεοῦ κύει.

The rest of the poem is not as trivial as it may seem at first sight: The shepherds are brought to the Lamb, the Magi to the sun. This parallelism of two images, as seductive as it may appear, seems to be an original idea of the epigrammatist. At least, it can neither be found in other epigrams nor (unless I failed to notice an occurrence) in the hymnographical texts of the Christmas liturgy. The metaphor of the star leading the Magi to the sun occurs now and then, but nowhere did I find a passage speaking of the shepherds being led to the Lamb.<sup>20</sup> If the two groups of persons are mentioned together at all, the shepherds' role is normally that of praising God,<sup>21</sup> as, for example, in the famous prooimion to Romanos' Christmas kontakion,<sup>22</sup> which everybody will recall when reading our epigram. A relatively close parallel can also be seen in a sticheron proeortion for Christmas:<sup>23</sup> Διέδραμε μηνύων Ἀστὴρ τὸν Ἥλιον τῆς δόξης Χριστὸν Ἀστρολόγους ἐν τῇ πόλει Βηθλεέμ· καὶ Ἀγγελοὶ Ποιμένας νῦν εὐαγγελιοῦνται· μεθ' ὧν συνδράμωμεν θεόφρονες.

The only iconographical implication of all this is that it presupposes a representation of the Nativity containing the Magi, the star, one angel, and some shepherds.<sup>24</sup>

IV. The main content of the scene of the Ὑπαπαντή is Symeon's receiving the baby from Mary's hands and holding it. So it is not too farfetched (though not very common in epigrams on the subject) that the poet should connect with the event the two Old Testament images of the tongs and of the burning bush, which are often related to the Virgin by Christian exegesis.<sup>25</sup> Cf. Gregory of Corinth<sup>26</sup> III 3–4:

τὸ τῦρ λαβὼν γὰρ λαβίδος τῆς παρθένου  
ἄφλεκτός ἐστι, λάμπεται φέγγει λέγων· . . .

V. The motif of the divine fire which can be touched without danger only by the elect links this epigram to the preceding. Gregory of Corinth also expresses this thought in his epigram on the Baptism (ibid., II 1.5–6):

Τὸ φῶς τὸ θεῖον τὸ φλογίζον κακίαν . . .  
Ἰωάννου μέγιστον ἱερὸν λύχνον  
φωτισμὸν αἰτῶν, ὁ πλάσας ἅπαν φάος.

In liturgical poetry the connection between divine fire and Christ's baptism is drawn, for example, in an Epiphany hymn of Kosmas<sup>27</sup>: Πυρὶ τῆς Θεότητος ἀύλῳ σάρκα ὑλικὴν ἡμφιεσμένος Ἰορδάνου περιβάλλεται τὸ νᾶμα ὁ σαρκωθεὶς ἐκ Παρθένου Κύριος. The biblical basis for the μὴ δείδιθι in V.1 of our epigram is John's initial hesitation to baptize

<sup>20</sup>The term ἄμνός τοῦ Θεοῦ indirectly linked with the shepherds at Bethlehem occurs in a commentary of Origen, *Catena graecorum patrum in Novum Testamentum*, ed. J. A. Cramer, II (Oxford, 1841), 21,8.

<sup>21</sup>Some passages where Magi and shepherds are mentioned as hurrying to Christ's birthplace are quoted by G. Millet, *Recherches sur l'iconographie de l'évangile aux XIV<sup>e</sup>, XV<sup>e</sup> et XVI<sup>e</sup> siècles*, 2nd ed. (Paris, 1960), 150 with notes 2–4. Unfortunately, I was unable to verify the texts quoted in n. 4.

<sup>22</sup>*Romanos le Mélode, Hymnes*, ed. J. Grosdidier de Matons, II (Paris, 1965), 50.

<sup>23</sup>*Menaia*, II, 596.

<sup>24</sup>For the various types, cf. Millet, 92–169.

<sup>25</sup>λαβίς used in a sermon on Symeon by Pseudo-Methodios, PG 18, col. 364B; additional references for both terms in Lampe s.vv.

<sup>26</sup>Ed. H. Hunger, *AnalBoll* 100 (1982), 637–51.

<sup>27</sup>*Menaia*, III, 146.

Jesus in Matt.3,14. The Baptist's fear is reflected in many representations of the scene where John touches Christ's head cautiously with his fingertips. Liturgical poetry dwells on this subject in different variations, the closest parallel to our epigram being a sticheron for 4 January, where the Baptist declares: οὐ ψάύσω σου πυρὸς ὁ χόρτος· αὐτὸς με βάπτισον.<sup>28</sup> It is interesting that on a wall painting in the exonarthex at Gračanica, which shows this preliminary scene to the Baptism, this very verse is quoted.<sup>29</sup>

VI. Though the divine light is, of course, the main issue in all statements on the Transfiguration, be it in verse or prose, our epigrammatist differs from his colleagues in that he lays special stress on a typological aspect: he compares what happened on Mount Tabor with the Old Testament narrative about Moses receiving the Law from God on Mount Sinai (Exod.20,18–21). In both cases Moses meets God on a mountain, but while on Sinai God had been veiled by darkness (ibid., 20,21 εἰς τὸν γνόφον οὗ ἦν ὁ θεός), Christ has superseded the Law and thus replaced darkness by light.<sup>30</sup> By stressing this element the poet resumes the thought that he has already expressed in the very first epigram of the cycle.<sup>31</sup> It may be a little astonishing that he does not say a single word about Elijah, the second Old Testament personage present on Mount Tabor and without doubt figuring on the picture the poet had before his eyes (as in every representation of the scene). But this he regards obviously as a detail of minor importance, which he sacrifices deliberately to his typological line of interpretation. In an indirect way Elijah may be included in the verses of the epigram by the noun θεόπτῆς, which, unlike θεοπτικός and θεοπτία, in patristic and Byzantine literature normally refers to Old Testament patriarchs and prophets.<sup>32</sup>

VII. Only the first part of the dialogue has a pendant in the Gospels (John 11,43 Λάζαρε δεῦρο ἔξω); the rest of the biblical narrative (ibid., 44) has been transformed to an answer of Lazarus by the epigrammatist,<sup>33</sup> who this time refrains completely from a theological interpretation of the scene. The unbinding of the bandages is a constant component of Byzantine representations of the resuscitation of Lazarus, and even the poet's idea of letting Lazarus himself answer corresponds in a way to the paintings where he is mostly depicted with open eyes intensely looking toward Jesus.<sup>34</sup>

VIII. In conformity with many other texts and with conventional iconography, the author ascribes the activities in honor of Jesus (spreading of garments and branches) to children, who thus put to shame their parents who will mock Jesus by dressing him with

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 76.

<sup>29</sup>Millet, 198–201.

<sup>30</sup>For the New Testament basis of this opposition of Christ the Light and the Thora, cf. *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, IV (Stuttgart, 1942), 1063–1077 (νόμος D II 3; III 3).

<sup>31</sup>An anonymous epigram on the Metamorphosis in the Palatine Anthology (I 112) also contrasts Christ's light with the shadow of the Law, though without explicit reference to Moses:

Λάμπας ὁ Χριστὸς ἐν Θαβὼρ φωτὸς πλέον  
σκιὰν πέπαυκε τοῦ παλαιτάτου νόμου.

<sup>32</sup>Cf. Lampe, s.v.; see, however, *Analecta Hymnica Graeca*, XII. Canones Augusti (Rome, 1980), No. V(1), 8–10, where the noun obviously designates the Apostles present at the Transfiguration.

<sup>33</sup>This seems to be an innovatory element. If Lazarus is speaking at all in other texts, which happens rarely, he praises God or transmits Adam's quest for redemption. Cf. W. Puchner, *Studien zum Kulturkontext der liturgischen Szene: Lazarus und Judas als religiöse Volksfiguren in Bild und Brauch, Lied und Legende Südosteuropas* (Vienna, 1991), 17–59.

<sup>34</sup>For the whole repertory of the scene, see Millet, 232–54.

a purple robe. Two of the three relevant epigrams in the *DOP* 46 collection follow the same line, as does Prodrornos in his iambic tetrastichon (PG 133, col.1189A):

Ναῖ, παῖδες, εἰς ἔλεγχον ἀνδρῶν ἀφρόνων  
Κλάδη φοροῦντες [read κλαδηφοροῦντες] εὐλογεῖτε τὸν Λόγον . . .

Gregory of Corinth, with his more differentiated formulation (V 8–9), is somewhat nearer to the New Testament original:

παῖδες κλάδους σείουσιν, ὕμνουσι βρέφη,  
λαοὶ χιτῶνας στρωννύουσιν εἰς ἔδος . . .

In all these texts the children are opposed more or less explicitly to the adult, in the Marcanus epigram even to their parents, although in the New Testament it is not the Jews but the Roman soldiers who do the deriding. Moreover, it has to be noted that the Gospels do not mention children at all in their report on the Entry into Jerusalem. Here it is the people (ὁ ὄχλος in Matt.21,8, πολλοί in Mark11,8) who spread garments and branches. Only a little later, and only in Matthew, are children mentioned (Matt.21,15): When the high priests are angry seeing Jesus performing miracles in the temple and τοὺς παῖδας τοὺς κρίζοντας ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ καὶ λέγοντας· ὡσαννὰ τῷ υἱῷ Δαυίδ, he answers their reproaches with the Psalm verse (Ps. 8,3) ἐκ στόματος νηπίων καὶ θηλαζόντων κατηρτίσω αἶνον. The role of the children in the Entry scene itself originates in a passage of the Gospel of Nicodemus:<sup>35</sup> καὶ οἱ παῖδες τῶν Ἑβραίων<sup>36</sup> κλάδους κατεῖχον ἐν ταῖς χερσὶν αὐτῶν καὶ ἔκραζον, ἄλλοι δὲ ὑπεστρώννυνον τὰ ἱμάτια αὐτῶν . . . The idea became successful in Byzantine tradition, in liturgy<sup>37</sup> as well as in iconography, though Millet could show that in the ninth to twelfth centuries there is a certain tendency toward sticking closer to the biblical text, especially in Gospel illustration.<sup>38</sup>

IX. The author devotes the epigram on the Last Supper exclusively to Judas,<sup>39</sup> and he does it in a way that does not reflect traditional Byzantine iconography. Byzantine painters (if they pay attention to Judas' role at all) follow the Synoptics, who report that the traitor put his own hand into the bowl (Matt.26,23; Mark 14,20).<sup>40</sup> It is this very version which Prodrornos follows in his hexametric tetrastichon (PG 133, col.1191AB):

Δέρκεο τὸν θρασύχειρα, τὸν ἀνθάδη ἧ ρά γε κείνον,  
Ὅς βάλεν ἐν κανέῳ προπετῇ χεῖρ'. Οὗτος ἐκεῖνος  
Δείπνου ἀνεγρόμενος φιλῆς λελάθοιτο, καὶ ἄρτου,  
Καδδὲ προδῶ λησταῖσι διδάσκαλον, ὡς ἀπόλοιτο.

<sup>35</sup> *Acta Pilati* I 3, ed. C. Tischendorf, *Evangelia apocrypha*, 2nd ed. (Leipzig, 1876), 218; Latin version on p. 340: infantes Hebraeorum.

<sup>36</sup> Of course, παῖδες τῶν . . . need not mean infants (cf. LSJ, s.v. παῖς, I 3), but it seems to have been understood in this way later on.

<sup>37</sup> Already Romanos, *Kontakion* XXXII ζ' 1 (Grosdidier de Matons, *Romanos le Mélode, Hymnes*, IV 38) formulates Βαῖσις βρέφη ὕμνουν σε, although in the second prooimion of the same kontakion (ibid., 30) we read Μετὰ κλάδων ὑμνήσαντες πρότερον . . . οἱ ἀγνώμονες Χριστὸν Ἰουδαῖοι τὸν Θεόν. Cf., e.g., *Triodion* (Rome, 1879), 600 Νηπίων ἐξ ἀκάκων, Χριστέ, τῷ πῶλῳ καθεζόμενος, κατεδέξω ἐπινίκιον ᾠδὴν. Ibid. . . . τοὺς κλάδους ἀρετῶν καὶ ἡμεῖς, ὡς οἱ Παῖδες, νῦν προσφέροντες Χριστῷ. Ibid., 602 ὁθεν παῖδες Ἑβραίων κλάδους χερσὶ κατέχοντες εὐφήμουν φωνῇ.

<sup>38</sup> Millet, 280–84.

<sup>39</sup> Rich documentation on Judas in literature, liturgy, iconography, and popular belief in Puchner, 61–113.

<sup>40</sup> Millet, 286–309; *LChrI*, I, 10–18.

In Christian exegesis there have always been discussions on the question of whether Judas took part in the Eucharist (which seems to be attested by the Synoptics) or only in the preliminary part of the meal (for which John 13,26 serves as argument).<sup>41</sup> Our poet stresses the fact that Judas, though drinking Christ's blood, did not eat his flesh, because by eating he would have gained (eternal) life (cf. John 6,51, ἐάν τις φάγῃ ἐκ τούτου τοῦ ἄρτου, ζήσεται εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα). There is no need, however, to postulate an underlying picture where Judas is shown leaving the assembly (a motif occurring sometimes in representations of the Apostles' Communion,<sup>42</sup> but most unusual in the Last Supper scene). On the other hand, this discrepancy does not necessarily exclude an inscriptional use of the epigram. The poet seems to have been so concentrated on the person of Judas that he sacrificed iconographic congruity to the attempt of expressing as clearly as possible what he regarded as the central theological issue of the scene.

X. The biblical report (John 13,6–9) is clear: Peter first refuses to have his feet washed by the Lord; then, when Jesus tells him that he will not be in communication with him (οὐκ ἔχεις μέρος μετ' ἐμοῦ) unless he has his feet washed, he cries out, "Lord, not only the feet, but also the hands and the head." Christ answers that if one is clean there is no need to wash anything but the feet. This part of the conversation is symbolized by the gestures both of Peter and of Jesus (both pointing to Peter's head) in the representations of the foot-washing.<sup>43</sup> Our poem, too, refers to this central part of the scene, only that the poet, by combining two different pericopes (John 13,6–9: foot-washing; Matt. 26,34.75: denial, tears), assigns to Jesus a new<sup>44</sup> and original argument for not washing Peter's head, the prediction that Peter himself will wash his head very soon with the tears he will shed over his denial of Jesus. The adverb τέως, reinforced by νῦν ("at this very moment," "for the time being"),<sup>45</sup> points to the interrelationship of the two chronologically separated events.

XI. Christ's prayer on the Mount of Olives has always been understood as a strong manifestation of his human nature.<sup>46</sup> As to iconography, it is very likely that the painting underlying our epigram followed the normal Byzantine type showing Christ twice;<sup>47</sup>

<sup>41</sup> *LThk*, V, 1152–54.

<sup>42</sup> *LChrI*, I, 173–75.

<sup>43</sup> *Millet*, 310–25.

<sup>44</sup> A connection between the two events (but not between washing and tears) is established by Romanos in the fourth stanza of his *kontakion* on the Denial (No. XXXIV, Grosdidier).

<sup>45</sup> The combination of the two adverbs occurs only in postclassical Greek and seems to be typical of the patristic vocabulary: the CD-ROM of the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* contains one occurrence in Strabo and several ones in patristic and other late antique texts: Strabo 13,1,26,1; Basil. ep. 23,15 (I 58 Courtonne); Greg. Naz. ep. 7,7 (I 10 Gallay); Ps.-Chrysostom, PG 50, col. 792,30; idem, *Byzantion* 52 (1982), 80,117; Jo. Philop., *Commentaria in Aristotelem Graeca* 14,2,309,10; 15,298,26; 17,608,18; 18,24; Simpl., *ibid.*, 10,1232,36; id., In Epict. 72,25 (ed. Dübner, Theophr.). While in Strabo, Philoponos, and Simplikios the use may be called pleonastic ("right now," "in this very passage"), in the Fathers the notion of chronological interrelationship prevails (Basil: τῶν νῦν τέως μὴ βλέπομένων, ἐν ἐπαγγελίαις δὲ ἀποκειμένων . . . ; Ps.-Chrysostom: Ἐπίσχωμεν, εἰ δοκεῖ, νῦν τέως ["nunc interim" correctly PG] τὴν γλῶσσαν, . . . περιμένειν δὲ . . . ).

I am deeply indebted to Prof. I. Ševčenko for this information as well as for many other extremely valuable remarks and corrections which he generously offered.

<sup>46</sup> See, e.g., *Catenae graecorum patrum in Novum Testamentum*, ed. J. A. Cramer, I (Oxford, 1840), 224,10–28 (Origen); J. Reuss, *Matthäus-Kommentare aus der griechischen Kirche* (Berlin, 1957), 149 f (Theodore), 258 (Cyril of Alexandria).

<sup>47</sup> For the iconography of the Gethsemane scene, see K. Wessel, "Gethsemane," *RBK*, II, 783–91. Cf. Ch. Ranoutsaki, *Die Fresken der Soterias Christos-Kirche bei Potamies: Studie zur byzantinischen Wandmalerei auf Kreta im 14. Jahrhundert* (Munich, 1992), 77–81.

whether it also contained the chalice, a detail extremely rare in Byzantine iconography, is hard to decide (the central role the chalice plays in the epigram is due to the formulation of the Synoptics and need not necessarily correspond with a specific trait of the painting).

XII. The designation of the traitor and the Jews as animals (including the opposition of lambs—or the Lamb—and rapacious beasts), though not really a standard metaphor in relevant texts (completely lacking in the lengthy curses on Judas in the Christos Paschon!), is not unusual.<sup>48</sup> See, e.g., Romanos, Kont. XXXIII 12,6<sup>49</sup> ὥρμησε πρὸς τοὺς θήρας, καταλιπὼν τοὺς ἄρνας, or a sticheron of the Maundy Thursday liturgy:<sup>50</sup> νῦν ἔβαλε τὰ ἅγια τοῖς κυσὶν ὁ μαθητής (an application of Matt.7,6, μὴ δώτε τὸ ἅγιον τοῖς κυσὶν τοῦ Judas). The preceding sticheron provides an exact parallel to V.3 of our epigram: καὶ στερεῖται κατ' ἄμφω ζωῆς προσκαίρου καὶ θείας.

XIII. The introduction of Adam (προπάτωρ) at this early point of the Passion seems unusual though not inappropriate, given that this is the first scene of the cycle where the Cross appears: Adam who had tasted the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge may now fully enjoy the fruit of the Tree of Life;<sup>51</sup> he is now released from the bonds of Hades by Christ's bonds. On depictions of the Way of the Cross, Christ is normally bound either by the neck (Cappadocia) or by the hands (Greece).<sup>52</sup> The combination of both bindings appears only on late monuments.<sup>53</sup>

XIV. Blood and water, the two substances flowing from Christ's wound, are both regarded as means and symbols of salvation, blood standing for Christ's life-bringing death, water for baptism. A clear distinction is rarely made between the respective role of each of the two elements: Greg. Naz., or.45,29 (PG 36, col.661D), αἷμα καὶ ὕδωρ τῆς πλευρᾶς χεόμενον· τὸ μὲν, ὡς ἀνθρώπου, τὸ δέ, ὡς ὑπὲρ ἀνθρώπων.<sup>54</sup> Sometimes the notion occurs that the two liquids show Christ alive even after his death: Theodore Balsamon, PG 137, col.620D, Ἀπὸ γὰρ νεκροῦ σώματος μὴ πεφυκός καταρρέειν ζέοντος αἵματος, ἐκ τοῦ Κυριακοῦ σώματος καὶ μετὰ θάνατον αἷμα καὶ ὕδωρ ζέοντα ἐξέρρευσαν, ὡς ἐκ ζωοποιοῦ σώματος ζωοποιά.<sup>55</sup> This notion seems to underlie our epigram, too.

<sup>48</sup> Interesting references to an illustration of the Betrayal in the Chludov Psalter (fol. 19v, with dog-headed figures and the marginal inscription Ἑβραῖοι οἱ λεγόμενοι κύνες) on the one hand, and to Neophytos Enkleistos on the other in A. and J. Stylianos, "The Militarization of the Betrayal and Its Examples in the Painted Churches of Cyprus," *Ευφρόσυνον. Αφιέρωμα στὸν Μ. Χατζηδάκη*, II (Athens, 1992), 570–81, esp. 575.

<sup>49</sup> Ed. Grosdidier de Matons, IV, 82.

<sup>50</sup> *Triodion* (Rome, 1879), 657.

<sup>51</sup> For the confrontation of the two trees see the quotations gathered by I. Ševčenko, *Byzantium and the Slavs* (Cambridge, Mass., 1991), 732. Also cf. Eugen. Panorm., XIII (ed. M. Gigante [Palermo, 1964], 96) In crucifixionem: Καὶ φυτὸν ἄλλο καθορᾶν πάρεστί μοι / καὶ δευτέρου δάνατον Ἀδὰμ ἐν ζύλῳ.

<sup>52</sup> Millet, 363–64.

<sup>53</sup> For the double binding Millet knows only two Slavic examples from the fourteenth century. It also occurs in the Ταξιάρχης τῆς Μητροπόλεως at Kastoria: A. Orlandos, "Τὰ Βυζαντινὰ μνημεῖα τῆς Καστορίας," *Αρχ.βυζ. Μνημ.* Ἑλλ. 4 (1938), 87 f; good reproduction in St. Pelekanides, *Καστορία*, I. Βυζαντινὰ τοιχογραφία. Πίνακες (Thessalonike, 1953), pl. 123 b. In St. Athanasios at Kastoria, the cord fastened at the neck is also wound around the wrists: Pelekanides, pl. 148 b (no mention in Orlandos). Another late example I just came across is that in the church of Hag. Nikolaos in Trianta (Rhodes), dating from ca. 1490–1510: E. Kollias, "Ἡ διαπόμπευση τοῦ Χριστοῦ στο ζωγραφικὸ διάκοσμο τοῦ Αγίου Νικολάου στα Τριάντα Ρόδου," *Ευφρόσυνον. Αφιέρωμα στὸν Μ. Χατζηδάκη*, I (Athens, 1991), 254 f with pls. IF and 127–28.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Lampe, s.v. αἷμα.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. L. H. Grondijs, *L'icographie byzantine du crucifié mort sur la croix* (Brussels, n.d.), 142.

The picture our poet had in mind (and probably before his eyes) probably showed the dead Christ on the cross (with the two liquids gushing forth from the wound), the cracked rocks and the darkened sun. It need not necessarily have contained the centurion, for his words (Matt.27,54, ἀληθῶς θεοῦ υἱὸς ἦν οὗτος; Mark 15,39, ἀληθῶς οὗτος ὁ ἄνθρωπος υἱὸς θεοῦ ἦν), uttered in reaction to the earthquake according to the Gospels, are ascribed by the poet, in a slightly modified form, to the elements themselves. So V.3 combines allusions to no fewer than three biblical passages, the centurion's testimony (Matt.27,54; Mark 15,39), the word κράζουσι (Luke 19,40) and the elements testifying to the cosmic character of the event (Matt.27,45.51; Luke 23, 44–45).

XV. Unlike other epigrammatists, the author refrains completely from a descriptive treating of the Descent from the Cross, concentrating fully on the soteriological aspect.<sup>56</sup> Once again (as in No. XIII) the mention of Adam does not correspond with a specific trait of iconography (which would be the case in the Anastasis scene), apart from Adam's skull under the cross, theologically essential for the Crucifixion but visible also on representations of the Descent.<sup>57</sup>

XVI. The epigram is reminiscent of one of the poems Εἰς ἀποκαθήλωσιν of the *DOP* 46 collection:

Διττοὶ μαθηταὶ τῷ φόβῳ κεκρυμμένοι  
κρύπτουσι Χριστὸν ὡς ἄπνουν ἐν τῷ τάφῳ.

XVII–XIX. Again, the poet concentrates on the dogmatic dimension of the events, that is, Christ's two natures in one hypostasis (XVII, XVIII) and the godliness of the Holy Spirit (XIX). The warning in XIX 1 (formulated following Rom. 3,19 ἵνα πᾶν στόμα φραγῇ) probably alludes to those persons who, according to the Acts of the Apostles (2,13), mocked the Apostles, calling their extraordinary way of speaking the effect of sweet wine, a reproach which Peter then refuted by his long sermon. Nothing in these epigrams seems to hint at any iconographic peculiarities.

XX. To the best of my knowledge this is the only poem of the cycle which is also transmitted completely (for the special case of No. II see above) outside the Marcianus. It is part of a small collection of poems ascribed to Nikephoros Kallistos Xanthopoulos in Cod. Sabait. 150 in Jerusalem<sup>58</sup> (the correctness of the attribution is highly improbable in view of the age of the Marcianus) and figures also among the epigrams for icons in a text published by A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus as supplement to the Painter's Manual of Dionysios of Phourna.<sup>59</sup>

The poet takes as point of departure the Old Testament motif of the rain falling on a fleece (Judg. 6,37–38; cf. especially the version in Ps. 71,6, καὶ καταβήσεται ὡς ὕετος

<sup>56</sup> Both elements, reference to the scene and theological interpretation, are combined in an epigram edited by E. Miller, *Manuelis Philae Carmina*, II (Paris, 1857), 420, and by myself in *JÖB* 19 (1970), 115.

<sup>57</sup> Grondijs, 141–50; Millet, figs. 497 ff.

<sup>58</sup> Ed. A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus, *BZ* 11 (1902), 45, No.11.

<sup>59</sup> Διονυσίου τοῦ ἐκ Φουρνᾶ Ἑρμηνεία τῆς ζωγραφικῆς τέχνης ed. A. Papadopoulos-Kerameus (St. Petersburg, 1909), 277.

ἐπὶ πόκον, καὶ ὥσεὶ σταγόνες στάζουσai ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν), which was originally related to Israel, the elect people, later to the Virgin conceiving Christ.<sup>60</sup>

V.1 refers to a special iconographic detail of the Koimesis: according to an old legend,<sup>61</sup> the Apostles were picked up by angels wherever they were preaching at the moment, embedded in a cloud and brought to Mary's deathbed.<sup>62</sup> So in some representations of the scene a number of little clouds is shown, each one carrying an apostle (sometimes accompanied by an angel).<sup>63</sup>

For a thorough understanding of the allusion we have to solve a problem of textual criticism. While in the Marcianus we read without any doubt δρόσοι, the two other text witnesses have δρόσον. At first sight, this could be regarded as the better version: the Apostles shed drops of dew, that is, their tears about the Virgin's death, and indeed the Apostles standing by the deathbed are often shown in deep emotion. Yet those sitting in the clouds (who, according to the legend, do not yet know the reason for their flight) never send tears to the Earth.<sup>64</sup> So it seems correct to understand στάζω as intransitive (just as in the Psalm verse quoted above) and regard the Apostles themselves (who, indeed, often look like drops in their wrapping) as the drops of dew coming down to Earth. Further evidence for this interpretation is provided by another epigram on the Koimesis, transmitted on folio 19r of the Marcianus (Lampros<sup>65</sup> gives title and incipit):

Εἰς εἰκόνα τῆς κοιμήσεως τῆς ὑπεραγίας Θεοτόκου  
 Βρέχουσιν ὧδε τοὺς ἀποστόλους νέφη·  
 ὁ μυστικός γὰρ ἀποθλίβεται πόκος·  
 σταγὼν δ' ἐπιστάξασα τοῦτον ὑψόθεν  
 τοῦ πνεύματος νῦν ἀνιμάται τὴν δρόσον·  
 πλὴν ἀλλὰ γῆν ἅπασαν ἀρδεύει κύκλω·  
 θανούσα καὶ γὰρ ζῆ τεκοῦσα παρθένος.

XXI. Though this epigram, as mentioned above,<sup>66</sup> is separated from the corpus by another poem (a votive epigram directed to the Archangel Michael on behalf of the Megas Hetaireiarches George Palaiologos<sup>67</sup>) and though its subject is rare in poetry as well as in painting, there can hardly be a doubt that it belongs to the cycle, considering that it continues exactly the interpretative line of No. X.

The passages immediately preceding and following the relevant scene are well known: the miraculous draught of fishes and the mission to Peter. The poet, however, concentrates fully on the breakfast and puts it into relation with the foot-washing at the

<sup>60</sup> Lampe, s.v.; cf. Michael Psellos, Poem 23, 53 ff (ed. L. G. Westerink [Stuttgart, 1992], 279).

<sup>61</sup> Already in Ps.-Melito, *PG* 5, col. 1234b.

<sup>62</sup> In the liturgy of 15 August reference is made to this episode in numerous places. Cf., e.g., *Menaia*, VI, 407 Θεαρχίῳ νεύματι πάντοθεν οἱ θεοφόροι Ἀπόστολοι ὑπὸ νεφῶν μεταρσίως αἱρόμενοι. . . .

<sup>63</sup> K. Kreidl-Papadopoulos, "Koimesis," *RBK*, IV, 136–82.

<sup>64</sup> See, e.g., the wall painting in the Peribleptos at Ohrid: V. J. Djurić, *Vizantijske freske u Jugoslaviji* (Beograd, 1974), pl. xv.

<sup>65</sup> *Νέος Ἑλλ.* 8 (1911), 18, No. 45.

<sup>66</sup> See note 5.

<sup>67</sup> Ed. Lampros, 143, No. 213. On George Palaiologos, who died 1167 or 1168, see J.-F. Vannier in J.-C. Cheynet and F. Vannier, *Études prosopographiques* (Paris, 1986), 156–58.

Last Supper, stating that Christ now by having breakfast with Peter as a friend washes away the filth of his denial.

The scene is included in Nikolaos Mesarites' description of the Church of the Apostles in Constantinople<sup>68</sup> and is also rendered in a few surviving monuments,<sup>69</sup> among them a fresco in the Hagia Sophia at Trebizond<sup>70</sup> dated around 1260.

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<sup>68</sup>Ch. XXXVI, G. Downey, "Nikolaos Mesarites: Description of the Church of the Holy Apostles at Constantinople," *TAPS*, n.s. 47 (1957), 889 (translation), 914 (text); cf. Th. Baseu-Barabas, *Zwischen Wort und Bild: Nikolaos Mesarites und seine Beschreibung des Mosaikschmucks der Apostelkirche in Konstantinopel* (Vienna, 1992), 225–26.

<sup>69</sup>Millet, 574–76.

<sup>70</sup>*The Church of Hagia Sophia at Trebizond*, ed. D. Talbot Rice (Edinburgh, 1968), 125 with fig. 88, pl. 48A. For the dating, *ibid.*, 243–44.



Appendix  
Scenes of the lives of Christ and the Virgin occurring in some epigram  
cycles of the middle Byzantine period

|                         | DOP | Marc | Psel | GKor | Maur | Ist3 |
|-------------------------|-----|------|------|------|------|------|
| Present. BMV            | —   | I    | I*   | —    | —    | —    |
| Annunciation            | I   | I    | I    | I    | —    | —    |
| Birth of Christ         | —   | I    | I    | I    | I    | I    |
| Innocents               | I   | —    | —    | —    | —    | —    |
| Hypapante               | —   | I    | I    | I    | —    | —    |
| Baptism                 | I   | I    | I    | I    | I    | I    |
| Transfiguration         | I   | I    | I    | I    | I    | I    |
| Lazarus                 | I   | I    | —    | —    | I    | —    |
| Palm Sunday             | I   | I    | I    | I    | I    | —    |
| Supper                  | I   | I    | —    | —    | —    | —    |
| Foot-washing            | I   | I    | I**  | —    | —    | —    |
| Mt. of Olives           | —   | I    | —    | —    | —    | —    |
| Judas                   | I   | I    | —    | —    | —    | —    |
| Peter's denial          | I   | —    | —    | —    | —    | —    |
| Christ dragged to Cross | —   | I    | —    | —    | —    | —    |
| Crucifixion             | I   | I    | I    | I    | I    | I    |
| Descent from Cross      | I   | I    | —    | I    | —    | —    |
| Entombment              | I   | I    | —    | —    | —    | —    |
| Anastasis               | I   | I    | I    | I    | I    | I    |
| Pselaphesis             | —   | —    | —    | —    | I    | —    |
| Thomas                  | I   | —    | —    | I    | —    | —    |
| Ascension               | I   | I    | I    | I    | I    | I    |
| Pentecost               | I   | I    | I    | I    | I    | I    |
| Dormition               | —   | I    | I    | —    | —    | —    |
| Breakfast               | —   | I    | —    | —    | —    | —    |

\*after Pentecost

\*\*after Dormition

Order in GKor: Birth, Baptism, Hypapante, Annunciation, Palm Sunday, Crucifixion, Descent from the Cross, Pentecost, Anastasis, Thomas, Ascension, Transfiguration

Order in Ist3: Birth, Baptism, Crucifixion, Anastasis, Ascension, Pentecost, Transfiguration

DOP = Marc.gr.507, Vatop.36, ed. P. Pagonari-Antoniou, *Δίπτυχα* 5(1991–92), 33–58; W. Hörandner, *DOP* 46 (1992), 107–15

Marc = Marc.gr.524, fol.105<sup>v</sup>–106<sup>r</sup> (ed. above)

Psel = Michaelis Pselli Poemata, ed. L. G. Westerink (Stuttgart, 1992), 455–58 (Nos. 69–82; dub., e cod. Bonon. Univ. 2911)

GKor = Gregorios Korinthios, ed. H. Hunger, *AnalBoll* 100(1982), 637–51 [= H. Hunger, *Epidosis* (Munich, 1989), No. XV]

Maur = Iohannis Euchaitorum metropolitae quae in Codice Vaticano Graeco 676 supersunt, ed. P. de Lagarde (Göttingen, 1882), 2–8 (Nos. 2–11)

Ist3 = Istanbul, Patr. Cod. 3, ed. R. S. Nelson, “Text and Image in a Byzantine Gospel Book in Istanbul <Ecumenical Patriarchate, cod. 3>,” Ph.D. diss. (New York University, 1978); good color reproductions in *Tò Οἰκουμενικὸ Πατριαρχεῖο. Ἡ μεγάλη τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐκκλησία* (Athens, 1989), 128–32